

# *Quickwrites*



Sam Grumont

# Quickwrites

Use OHT or data projector

A quickwrite<sup>1</sup> is a first draft response to a short piece of writing (usually a poem, one page of prose, or a short picture book).

Write for 2-3 minutes off a found idea or borrowed line from a text, responding to something that sparks a reaction in the reader or listener's mind. Try to keep to the time limit as I've found that this is crucial.

Make sure you date each entry. These form seed ideas for students to return to with the idea of selecting one to develop into published pieces.

Ask students to:

1. Write as quickly as you can for two or three minutes, capturing all that comes to your mind in response to the work, or
2. Borrow a line or part of a line (they choose or the teacher chooses) from the work and write off (or from) that particular line nonstop for two or three minutes, or
3. Use a specific line or particular style as a model from which to write, as in the example of suggestions for Lindsay's poem, "In Remembrance..."
4. Share their writing with a partner or the class.

---

<sup>1</sup> The material is adapted from *100 Quickwrites* by Linda Reif, Scholastic  
Sam Grumont: *Quickwrites compiled Adapted idea from 100 quickwrites by Liinda Reif, Scholastic*

# Angry

I'm feeling so angry I kick up the stones.  
I'm feeling angry right through to my bones.

I'm feeling really, really bad.  
I snap at Mum and I snarl at Dad.

When they ask me, What are you angry for?  
I stomp to my room and slam the door.

I'm feeling angry ---that's all I can say.  
I wasn't picked for the team today.

*Jane Buston<sup>2</sup>*

---

## Try this:

- *For 2-3 minutes, write as quickly as you can all that this poem brings to mind for you.*
- *Borrow any line and write as quickly and as specifically as you can all that comes to mind, letting the line lead your thinking.*
- *Write whatever this poem brings to mind for you.*

---

<sup>2</sup> From *The School Magazine, ORBIT*, April 2005.

# April Rain Song

Let the rain kiss you.  
Let the rain beat upon your head with silver liquid drops.  
Let the rain sing you a lullaby.

The rain makes still pools on the sidewalk.  
The rain making running pools in the gutter.  
The rain plays a little sleep-song on our roof at night ---

And I love the rain.

*Langston Hughes*

---

## Try this:

- *For 2-3 minutes, write as quickly as you can about any experience this poem brings to mind for you.*
- *Borrow any line from this poem and write for 2-3 minutes, letting the line lead your thinking.*

# *Endangered*

It is so quiet on the shore of this motionless lake  
you can the slow recession of extinct animals  
as they leave through a door at the back of the world,  
disappearing like the verbs of a dead language:

the last troop of kangaroos hopping out of the picture, the  
ultimate paddling of ducks and pitying of turtledoves  
and, his bell tolling in the distance, the final goat.

*Billy Collins*

---

## **Try this:**

- *For 2-3 minutes, write as quickly as you can about any experience this poem brings to mind for you.*
- *Borrow any line from this poem and write for 2-3 minutes, letting the line lead your thinking.*

# He Shaved His Head

He shaved his head to release his imagination.

He did it to get a tattoo on his shiny head.

He did it to lose his normality.

He did it to become a freak.

He did it because he was angry.

He did it to make people angry.

He did it for himself.

*Rene Ruiz from You Hear Me?  
Edited by Betsy Franco<sup>3</sup>*

---

## Try this:

- *For 2-3 minutes, write as quickly as you can all that this poem brings to mind for you.*
- *Borrow any line and write as quickly and as specifically as you can all that comes to mind, letting the line lead your thinking.*
- *Change the pronoun "he" to the first person "I," and the second person "you" or the third person "she", and write about something that person did, and why, as quickly and as specifically as you can.*

---

<sup>3</sup> From Linda Reif, *100 Quickwrites*, (2003) Scholastic

# Insanity

Hit!  
Smash  
Guts,  
Crush heads.  
Break  
Legs,  
Arms,  
Backs.  
Men  
In stacks,  
All  
After a ball.

*Gaston Dubois from American Sports Poems<sup>4</sup>*

---

## Try this:

- *For 2-3 minutes, write as quickly as you can all that this poem brings to mind.*
- *Write as quickly and as specifically as you can about any activity, trying this list technique.*
- *Write as quickly and as specifically as you can about whether you agree or disagree with the title as a description of football.*

---

<sup>4</sup> From Linda Reif, *100 Quickwrites*, (2003) Scholastic

# That Kind of Day

It's that kind of day  
and that kind of season  
when the breeze is sweet  
and the cool air calls  
"Come out!"  
It beckons the folks  
who come out of doors  
and wander about  
pretending at first  
to look for chores  
although they know  
they just want to walk  
in the breeze and the pale  
sunlight  
it's that kind of day

*Eloise Greenfield*

---

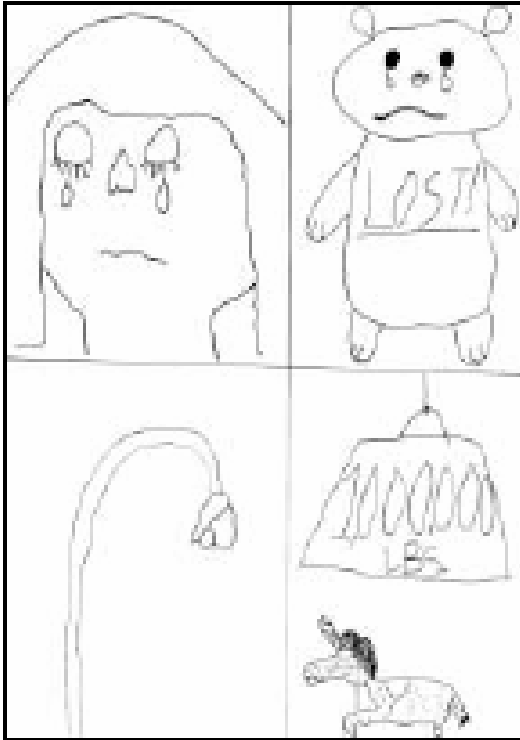
## Try this:

- For 2-3 minutes, write as quickly as you can about any experience this poem brings to mind for you.
- Borrow any line from this poem and write as quickly as you can all that the line brings to mind, letting the line lead your thinking.

---

<sup>5 5</sup> From Linda Reif, *100 Quickwrites*, (2003) Scholastic





## Jen

I asked you to dance,  
 But you were still crying.  
 I gave you a rose,  
 But you were still depressed.  
 I gave you a teddy bear,  
 But you never received it.  
 I gave you a porcelain  
 unicorn,  
 But you were still broken up.  
 I tried to be nice,  
 I tried to comfort you,  
 I tried to help you,  
 But none of it worked  
 So I cried.  
 And you don't know  
 How much it would mean to  
 me  
 Just to see you,

Smile.

Jeff B.

Linda Rief: 100*Quickwrites*<sup>6</sup>

## Try this:

- For 2–3 minutes, write as quickly as you can about any experience this brings to mind for you.
- Borrow any line from this poem and write for 2–3 minutes, letting the line lead your thinking.

<sup>6</sup> <sup>6</sup> From Linda Rief, *100 Quickwrites*, (2003) Scholastic

# Knoxville, Tennessee

I always like summer  
best  
you can eat fresh corn  
from daddy's garden  
and okra  
and greens  
and cabbage  
and lots of  
barbeque  
and buttermilk  
and homemade ice-cream  
at the church picnic  
and listen to  
gospel music  
outside  
at the church  
homecoming  
and go to the mountains with  
your grandmother  
and go barefooted  
and be warm  
all the time  
not only when you go to bed  
and sleep

*Nikki Giovanni from Knoxville, Tennessee<sup>7</sup>*

---

## Try this:

- *For 2-3 minutes, write as quickly as you can all that this poem brings to mind for you.*
- *Borrow the line, "I always like ...best," and insert a person, place, thing, event, season, etc. Write as quickly and as specifically as you can to describe (in a list format, if you prefer) all those things you like best.*

---

<sup>7</sup> <sup>7</sup> From Linda Reif, *100 Quickwrites*, (2003) Scholastic

# *Rambling Autobiography*

I was born after World War 2 in Woodend. I love chocolate and cake and cream. I threw a lid of a can at Geoff Radford and split his head open. We played with shanghais and had wars using acorns for ammo. When I was in high school I was called up to the principal's office because a couple of us had set fire to paper on top of heaters in our classroom. Tears slid down my face when I told my mum. One of my students came up to me years later and said "I always remember you as we had fun in your class." Janet Hastings liked me but I was in love with Diana Marsden. I attended confirmation class because Diana was in it but she ignored me. I can still smell the leaves burning in autumn when my father raked them into the gutter and lit them. I taught in China for two years and had to block up holes in the kitchen where rats sneaked in for a visit and feed. I hitchhiked to Cairns when I was 18 and a truck ran over my bag beside the road and crashed into the embankment and rolled over on its side. I love reading. I attended the birth of Danielle in 1974 which was not so common then and I still see her being born and remember thinking it was a miracle. I help my son Zack at his pub in Guildford by washing dishes on pizza night. I remember waking along the Seine river in Paris on a warm summer night watching people playing music and people dancing the tango and people demonstrating some form of martial arts and people eating and drinking as tourist boats glided past.

*Sam Grumont*

---

## **Try this:**

- *For 2-3 minutes, write as quickly as you can your own "rambling autobiography."*
- *For 2-3 minutes write as quickly and as specifically as you can about one thing this brought to mind for you.*
- *If you're stuck for starters, borrow any phrase and write from that, such as*
  - *I was born at ... during... when..."*
  - *"...playing with shanghai..."*
  - *"I can still smell ...."*

# Remembrance

*For my grandmother, Clarice Smith Chapman, 1914-1989*

I remember... we collected wild strawberries  
And made mud pies and built  
Block houses and guided  
Our cart down the supermarket aisle  
And picked carrots and washed  
Dishes and baked cookies and cut  
Paper dolls and watched chickadees  
And played checkers and ate scrambled eggs and  
Took our time on the stairs  
And you never told me you were dying.

I wanted the chance to say goodbye.

*Lindsay O.<sup>8</sup>*

---

## Try this:

*Think of someone you care deeply about (they might be still alive). Using Lindsay's phrase "I remember ... we" and her style of linking one thing to another, write out the things you have done with this person as quickly as you can.*

*Write in the same way using the second person "you" instead of "we".*

*Borrow any line from this poem and write as quickly as you can all that the line brings to mind, letting the line lead your thinking.*

*Write whatever this poem brings to mind for you.*

---

<sup>8 8</sup> From Linda Reif, *100 Quickwrites*, (2003) Scholastic

# We Real Cool

*The Pool Players.*

*Seven at the Golden Shovel.*

We real cool. We

Left school. We

Lurk late. We

Strike straight. We

Sing sin. We

Thin gin. We

Jazz June. We

Die soon.

*Gwendolyn Brooks*<sup>9</sup>

---

## Try this:

- *For 2-3 minutes, write as quickly as you can all that this poem brings to mind for you.*
- *Borrow any line and write as quickly and as specifically as you can all that comes to mind, letting the line lead your thinking.*

---

<sup>9</sup> <sup>9</sup> From Linda Reif, *100 Quickwrites*, (2003) Scholastic